

A. J. Seligman House  
802 Madison Avenue  
Helena  
Lewis and Clark County  
Montana

HABS No. MT-24

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

A. J. SELIGMAN RESIDENCE

HABS No. MT-24

ADDRESS: 802 Madison Ave, Helena, Lewis and Clark County, Montana.

OWNER: Paul L. Holenstein

OCCUPANT: Various tenants

USE: Apartment house

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Albert Joseph Seligman came to Montana in 1881 from New York City. He was a member of one of the wealthiest families in the country, one which ranked financially with the Rothschilds and the Morgans. The J. & W. Seligman & Co. banking firm had invested heavily in mining enterprises in Helena, and was having difficulty in managing them from a distance. A. J. Seligman, then a young mining engineer presumably was sent to look after the Seligman interests.

Seligman and the family financial backing he commanded became an important factor in the development of Helena and the Montana Territory. During and following the 1893 panic, Seligman and his money helped save a number of Montana businesses that might otherwise have been closed.

In 1886, Seligman commissioned Cass Gilbert, then practicing architecture in St. Paul, Minn., to design a "bachelor's abode" for him, amid rumors that he would soon be married. The rumors were correct; he married Lillie Glazier in New York City on Dec. 22, 1886, and brought his bride to Montana to live in this mansion.

The building is one of a number of structures, private, public and commercial, designed by eastern or midwestern architects for this prosperous center of activity in the Montana Territory in the 1880's.

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Albert Joseph Seligman came to Helena, Montana, from New York City in 1881. At the time of his arrival he was twenty-two years old and a mining engineer. The firm of J. & W. Seligman & Co. had invested in Montana mining, and presumably he was sent out to safeguard its interests.

A. J. Seligman was welcomed in Montana, both for himself and for the financial backing which he provided for many Montana enterprises. He bought control of the Gregory Consolidated Mines & Works. He refinanced and expanded Bach, Cory & Co., of Helena, making it the largest wholesale grocery business in the Territory and became its president. He bought a big block of stock in the American National Bank of Helena, and was vice-president. A street railroad company, a woolen mill in Helena to process the product of Montana sheep ranches, the St. Paul and Helena Land and Improvement Company, and a cattle ranch in Meagher County were other projects in which Seligman had a financial interest.

A. J. Seligman was also active in politics. He was a member of the Territorial Legislature in 1884-85, and was chairman of the Republican Territorial Central Committee at the time Montana became a state. The largest political bet of that time was made when Seligman bet Colonel Charles A. Broadwater \$10,000 that Thomas Carter would defeat Martin Maginnis in the Congressional election.

The Seligman home in Helena was the scene of some of the biggest social events in the state. Their receptions were attended by foreign diplomats and eastern dignitaries as well as by Montanans. It was luxuriously furnished with items gathered by the Seligmans from all over the world.

In 1899, A. J. Seligman moved back to New York City where he followed the family tradition of banking-brokerage. He retained his interests in Butte mining, and after retiring from banking in 1927, he devoted his attention to the Butte Copper and Zinc

in which he had a controlling interest.

The Seligman home in Helena was sold to Dr. O. M. Lanstrum, Helena physician, in 1912. Lanstrum was also prominent in the Republican party of the state. He served in the Montana House of Representatives in 1903 and 1905, and was chairman of the State Central Committee in 1906. In 1918, he received the Republican nomination for U. S. Senator, defeating incumbent Jeannette Rankin in the primary.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL AND REFERENCES

Henry, Olive, "They Buil't More Stately Mansions in Gay Nineties", Helena Independent-Record, Helena, Montana, June 3, 1962.

Helena Weekly Herald (newspaper), Helena, Montana, 1886-87.

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Peet, Herbert M., "Scion of Wealthy Family 'Played for Sucker'", Great Falls Tribune, Montana Parade section, Great Falls, Montana, July 24, 1955.

Stout, Tom, Montana Its Story and Biography, American Historical Society, Chicago, 1921, vol. III, p. 735.

White, Carl J., "Financial Frustrations in Territorial Montana", Montana the Magazine of Western History, Spring, 1967.

#### ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

##### EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions - 48' x 80'; two floors plus a full attic and basement.

Foundation - native granite.

Wall Construction - wood frame, wood siding.

Porches - two; one over main entrance and one over side on south entrance.  
over the circular driveway.

Openings - Entrances: main entrance facing eastward, 3' x 7' oak single panel door having a single light. Side entrance facing southward, four panel door.

Windows: various types of wood sash; D.H. 2/2; 2/6 D.H.; set of two 12/1 D.H. units separated by wood column flanked by two fixed 1/2 units; bay window unit of two D.H. 1/1 with stained glass transom flanked by two D.H. 1/1 units having wood transoms; D.H. 6/6 units; dormers -- D.H. 12/1, D.H. 1/1, D.H. 2/2, D.H. 2/6; one wood sash, fixed 6 light with arched transom of 1 central and 6 radial lights; three fixed sash rectangular units having a diamond shaped mullion forming 5 lights; one fixed unit of 20 lights.

Roof - wood shingle, hipped roof with turrets; approximately 45° pitch.

Chimney - brick.

## INTERIOR

Floor Plan - The original plan consisted of twenty-two rooms. The 1938 remodeling of the building into apartments made an eight room unit in the front section of the building over the two main floors (including the spiral staircase in the turret), and the remaining fourteen rooms were adapted into three additional apartments.

Entry is gained through the main east entrance into a small vestibule closed by double oak doors. A hall with a porphyry fireplace gives access to the spiral staircase (in the turret, with a powder room beneath the stairs) to the second floor, living room with another polished porphyry fireplace, dining room with a third fireplace, library, kitchen, and butler's pantry. The kitchen and work area were converted into a three room apartment in the rear (west) of the structure, while the butler's

station was altered to become a kitchen for the front eight room apartment. The side entrance leads to the rear first floor apartment and a back staircase leads up to both the single second floor apartment (about 1/3 of the second floor) and to the single four room third floor (attic) apartment -- this area was originally the ballroom of the residence.

The front two-story apartment contains three bedrooms, two with phorphyry fireplaces, and three bathrooms.

The full basement, in parts more than half a story above grade on the north, also includes a wine cellar.

Stairway - A spiral stairway with oak balustrade is located within a turret and gives access to the second floor bedrooms in the front apartment. A back enclosed staircase leads to the rear second floor apartment and the third floor.

Floors - oak T & G, carpets; alterations have added some tile.

Wall and Ceiling Finish - originally plaster, wallpaper; oak beamed ceiling in living room; hardwood wainscot in dining room; library paneled in hardwood.

Doors - original paneled hardwood.

Trim - elaborately moulded hardwood.

Hardware - brass.

Lighting - originally gas.

Heating - steam.

#### GENERAL SETTING

The building occupies the northwest corner of the intersection of Madison Ave. and Stuart St.,

and is oriented eastward on Madison Avenue. Originally the grounds extended a full block east-west along Stuart Street. The carriage house and servant's quarters are now individual residences.

Report prepared by : John N. DeHaas, Jr  
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Reviewed for HABS by:Eleni Silverman